

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this Application, as presently amended and in light of the following discussion, is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-10 are pending; Claims 8 and 9 are amended; and no claims are canceled or newly added herewith. It is respectfully submitted that no new matter is added by this amendment.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1, 4, 7 and 8 are rejected for double patenting over Claim 10 of copending application 10/706,977; Claims 8-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph; and Claims 1-10 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2002/0064439 to Otaguro in view of U.S. Patent No. 6,473,993 to Tokunaga.

With respect to the double patenting rejection, Applicants will consider filing a Terminal Disclaimer at a later time in the prosecution of this application.

With respect to the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, the noted informalities have been addressed by the present amendment. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that this rejection be withdrawn.

With regard to the rejection of the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as unpatentable over Otaguro in view of Tokunaga, that rejection is respectfully traversed.

The applied art does not teach or suggest, a wafer processing apparatus that includes, among other features, a chamber with a first opening portion and a door that substantially closes the first opening portion. The recited door has a projection which partially protrudes from its outer shape, and, when the door is positioned to substantially close the first opening portion, only the projection contacts a peripheral portion of the first opening portion, as recited in Claim 1 and similarly recited in the independent claims.

The outstanding Office Action acknowledges that Otaguro fails to teach, disclose, or suggest specifically that the door has projections that partially protrude from the outer shape of the door. However, the Office Action asserts that Tokunaga makes up for this deficiency. Applicants respectfully disagree.

Specifically, Tokunaga teaches providing projections at the sealing surface of the FIMS facing to the wall of the pod in order to provide a gap between sealing surfaces of a load port system so that a flow of air can be maintained. That is, protuberance 22 or 23 is provided at a sealing surface of the load port, which faces to a sealing surface of the pod. The protuberance 22 or 23 is used to set the distance between the sealing surfaces of the load port and the pod, as a predetermined value. The predetermined value is selected to maintain the flow of the air from an opening of the load port to exterior space around the pod, so as to prevent the air flow from flowing into the inside space of the pod.

In contrast, according to exemplary embodiments of the invention defined by the independent claims, the projections are provided on the door which is used for substantially closing the first opening portion of the load port. In addition, the projections can stop the door to maintain the predetermined positional relationship between the door and the first opening portion. That is, the projections of exemplary embodiments are provided on the door, and are provided to be partially protruded from the outer shape of the door. The above discussed features are not shown or suggested by the applied art references Tokunaga and Otaguro.

As discussed in the Specification, in order to keep wafer processing apparatuses clean, the pressure within a mini-environment is maintained higher than an external ambient pressure by a predetermined pressure difference. As such, when a door is opened or closed during the transferring of a wafer, a gas flow from the interior of the mini-environment to the exterior is created, generating flow turbulence as the air flow passes over the door, thereby

stirring up dust in the exterior that will cause contamination of the wafers inside the clean box. Applicants' advantageous projections as set forth in the claimed invention, are designed to eliminate, or significantly reduce, the above-described flow turbulence.

Accordingly, Applicants respectfully submit that Otaguro and Tokunaga, neither individually nor in any combination, support a *prima facie* case of obviousness of the invention recited in claims.

Applicants respectfully submit that, based at least on at least the above-summarized remarks, Claims 1-10 patentably define over the asserted applied art Otaguro and Tokunaga.

Consequently, in view of the present amendment, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal Allowance and an early and favorable reconsideration of this application as presently amended is respectfully requested. A Notice of Allowance for Claims 1-10 is earnestly solicited.

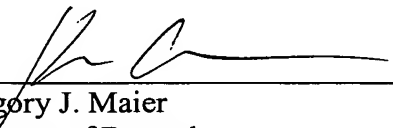
Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representatives at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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